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PRESS RELEASE

USAID helps Macedonian automotive, tool and die industry increase value-added exports by 30%

On September 17, 2008, the USAID Competitiveness Project, in collaboration with the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering's Center of Excellence – CIRKO launched the e-Library, an electronic database of machine tool and die technical drawings.

"This e-Library provides an easy-to-use automation tool for the executives of the machine tool industry in Macedonia to help them improve their production operations and increase efficiency. This tool will allow Small and Medium size Enterprises (SME) to respond promptly to foreign buyers' demands, set competitive prices and increase value added exports." – said Professor Atanas Kocov, Manager of CIRKO, and newly elected Dean of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering.

"The automotive, tool and die industry has always been important to Macedonia's economy. But in order to compete and win in the global economy the industry needs to adopt new technologies and know how. This is exactly what the e-Library offers the industry" – said Michael Fritz, USAID Macedonia Mission Director.

Specifically, the use of the e-Library application will enable Macedonian automotive parts, machine tools and die manufacturers to be more competitive in global markets, by decreasing their response time to foreign buyers' orders, calculating realistically the cost of production and setting competitive prices. The use of this application will contribute up to 30% increase in value added exports for the industry.

Additionally, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering's Center of Excellence - CIRKO engaged 15 students in internships in the process of developing, testing and upgrading the e-Library application. These internships help students further develop their practical and employable skills and strengthen the much needed connection between academia and industry.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.